

To Win the Cold Civil War, Seek Peace through Strength

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Capitulation and cowardice hand America to identitarian propagandists.

“There comes a time when silence is betrayal,” said Martin Luther King, Jr. in a famous speech breaking with Lyndon Johnson on the Vietnam war. For conservatives today, we have also reached a point where silence is betrayal—in this case a silence about the liberal war on American nationhood in the service of identity politics.

We see the inevitable result of that silence in the riots on America’s streets, sponsored by the Antifa movement that has openly declared war on America and its institutions, and the Black Lives Matter movement that has perpetuated one hate hoax and fictitious narrative after another, whipping up many in their community into a frenzy of racial resentment.

Of course, many on the Right—led by my colleagues at Claremont —have [denounced](#) identity politics. But while identifying the problem is important, identifying a meaningful [strategy](#) to defeat it is much more difficult.

The good news is that the [Cold Civil War](#) (in the memorable phrase of Angelo Codevilla) can be won using the same tactic that Ronald Reagan used to win the Cold War: peace through strength. And it is imperative that we win this war before it goes from cold to hot, as it seems to be doing on America’s streets this week. Winning this war doesn’t entail beta-whining about social justice warriors. We need to make it clear to the Left that their continued use of identity politics will have consequences severe enough to deter their misbehavior. And to do that, we must change our entire mindset.

This means going cold-turkey on ritual denunciations of others on the Right who fall afoul of liberal pieties, and instead demanding that those who claim the mantle of conservatism don’t simply parrot demonstrably false and divisive liberal frameworks in a futile quest for “legitimacy.”

Normalizing Appeasement

Examples of the Right’s cowardice on identity politics abound. On immigration, what is denounced as the great replacement “conspiracy theory” when noted by the Right is

simply great news for America when [noted gleefully](#) by [the Left](#). We're supposed to sit quietly while the Left pushes fact-free "gender gap" stories—when [it is actually a woman's success or failure in the marriage market](#) that will decide whether she is likely to support the GOP.

We are supposed to sit in silent acquiescence as an explosion of transgenderism, [even among children](#), often involving hormonal injections and surgical mutilation without parental consent, becomes normalized.

Joe Biden [proposed the shredding of any presumption of innocence](#) or due process when the Trump Administration recently finalized new rules for how universities should handle sexual harassment or assault claims under Title IX. (This is perhaps unsurprising given that when the rule change was initially announced, [Biden took to Twitter](#) to denounce it while pushing the completely discredited "fact" that one in five women were sexually assaulted in college.)

The galling hypocrisy of Biden, having been credibly accused of sexual assault, refusing to grant accused college students the same privilege he demanded for himself, is one thing. But while many conservatives were happy to take easy shots at Biden, far fewer were willing to truly demand justice on the core merits of the issue itself: that men should be given the presumption of innocence and due process rights when they are accused. Men, in today's political discourse, are not a protected class.

With respect to race, the Right must [pretend that there is an epidemic of interracial violence by whites](#), an obvious fabrication to anyone looking disinterestedly at the data. The recent conflagration that has engulfed the nation was partially caused by the Right's unwillingness to confront the dark side of identity politics.

Consider the utter mendaciousness of the narrative that African Americans are being "literally hunted" by whites, as LeBron James recently [tweeted](#). We can see the results of these years of unchallenged lies on the streets of our cities today.

Real life is more complicated than the dogmatic narrative now embraced by our elites. Heather Mac Donald, one of the only mainstream conservatives who has dealt seriously with this issue, has [reported](#) that there were over 500,000 interracial felonies against whites by African Americans in 2018, while whites committed the reverse scarcely more than 50,000 times—despite the fact that whites outnumber African Americans five to one.

The ratio of white victimization has actually *increased* under the Trump Administration, contrary to the wails from the Left and media (but I repeat myself) about white nationalist violence. African Americans are also substantially [overrepresented as perpetrators of hate crimes](#).

"Conservatives" participate in the racial gaslighting of the American public every time they give in to the shrieks of identity politics leftists, validate their manufacture of isolated cases into major news stories, and steadfastly ignore the far more numerous instances of crime with other racial dynamics.

If you were one of the millions of white Americans on the receiving end of a felonious crime by an African American over the last decade, and you had to listen to the constant false drumbeat of black victimization and white villainy and watch alleged conservatives say nothing to challenge this narrative because they were afraid of being called racist, how would you feel?

To be clear, crime should always be treated as crime, without respect to the race of the perpetrator. But the answer to racial slander cannot simply be cowed silence, or much worse, show-trial confessions of guilt.

Some would say that with tensions so high now is not the time to discuss these sensitive facts. But now is *exactly* the time to discuss these facts—when people’s attentions are focused. We must seek reconciliation, but true reconciliation can only come from accepting reality—not illusions and lies.

What’s worse, even as our streets literally burn and anarchy reigns, most of our allegedly conservative “leadership” validates the false narratives of left-wing cultural (and now literal) arsonists. They wear their cowardice as a cloak and call it morality.

None of this means we should ignore the very damaging role that Antifa and the largely white radical Left have played in these sordid riots. As academic researcher Zach Goldberg has documented, radical white [leftists are far to the left of ethnic](#) minorities on issues of identity politics.

But we can’t simply attribute the violence to Antifa alone—Black Lives Matter lit the fuse through their false and exaggerated claims and incendiary rhetoric, and African Americans have been heavily involved in looting and violence over the past week, including many horrific incidents of interracial violence that would have been front-page news had the races been reversed.

The lame attempts of Democratic leaders to place blame on “outside agitators” for rioting and looting showed that the Democrats have embraced the language and viewpoint of 1960s Southern sheriffs, not 1960s civil rights leaders.

Peace in Our Time?

There is an alternative to our program of cowardice on identity politics—and that alternative is peace through strength. The phrase “Peace Through Strength” is an old one, dating back to the ancient Romans. But President Reagan’s assertive use of the concept, in contrast to the weakness and vacillation of the Carter years, had a galvanizing effect on Republican policymakers. Little wonder that the term has appeared in every GOP platform since Reagan’s era.

Yet when it comes to fighting the cold civil war, the Right looks to Neville Chamberlain—and not Reagan or Churchill—for guidance. For decades now, the GOP establishment has lectured us that if we just cede ground on whatever identity politics issues the Left is slandering us for today, we can have “Peace in our Time.”

What conservatism needs now is not peace, but a sword. Or, in secular terms, we must reject mere containment of the Left’s out-of-control identity politics in favor of rollback (another key element of the Reaganite agenda against Communism, on which he had to fight the spineless GOP mandarins of his day).

There is simply no dialogue to be had with propagandists who demand, as a condition for that dialogue, that we acknowledge as true their fantasies on race, gender, immigration, or any other element of identity politics. Nor can we engage in a dialogue with gaslighters who insist that our deeply-held concerns about the direction of American society are manifestations of paranoia—except when they are [celebrating their success](#). GOP voters know this intuitively and look with disgust at our politicians and our pundits who consistently refuse to defend either truth or their legitimate interests.

Zero Tolerance or Bust

The “conservative” establishment is right about one thing—a nation built on racial, gender, or other identity politics is digging its own grave. But they are catastrophically wrong in their diagnosis of how we get to a post-identity politics society. The apparatchiks of appeasement think they can avoid the wrath of our ravenous opponents

by throwing one of their comrades to the wolves in hopes that they will be eaten last. We now see the results of that strategy in America's streets.

In contrast, Reagan understood that only when the Soviets truly feared American strength would peace be possible. Today, the Left possesses the nuclear weapons of identity politics, which they are now trying to detonate in cities throughout the nation, using protests as cover. Conservatives can deplore those weapons as much as they want, but the political reality is that the Left will use them unless we have our own nuclear deterrent.

The way that we make those weapons ineffective is to make it clear that the price for using them is unacceptably high. That means aggressively challenging their lies and banishing from the conservative tent any politician or pundit who upholds them. In the present moment it means an assertive and unapologetic assertion of law and order without giving into demands for dialogue about the "root causes" of racial (and now literal) arson. The identity politics bullies don't even represent their own communities, much less the wider nation.

Margaret Thatcher greatly enhanced British power and prestige globally by going after even a small insult to British sovereignty in the far-away Falkland Islands. Similarly, Reagan sent the military into Grenada to send a message to the Communists that not a sparrow could fall without our noticing and acting to protect our interests. This must be our approach to leftist identity politics—zero tolerance and strong retaliation toward their aggression.

This means, among other things, full prosecution of rioters under all relevant federal and state laws, and strenuously pursuing hate crimes charges for racially targeted violence during riots. It means conservative state legislatures aggressively defunding universities who institutionally support lawlessness or take political positions that effectively slander our voters. It means aggressively publicizing the actual facts about crime and race or sexual assault on campus, or the harms to mental and physical health posed by transgenderism. It means talking about *all* victims of hate crimes, not just the ones that fit in the liberal media's preferred categories.

Only if the Democrats recognize that their racist and sexist identity politics strategy is a losing political gambit will they cease from playing it. We need to make it clear that if they punch us, we are not going to whine and complain—we are going to punch back harder. Only when they truly believe this will they cease their bullying. Only if rioters are met with disciplined but firm and unapologetic force, force that realizes it represents not just order but morality and justice, can calm be restored to our streets and to our politics.

In his 1983 State of the Union address, focused specifically on the theme of peace through strength, Reagan laid down the gauntlet to his foes—and ours:

"You and I have the courage to say to our enemies, 'There is a price we will not pay.' 'There is a point beyond which they must not advance.'"



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